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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/08/2018

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SUBJECT: PA SECURITY SAYS HAMAS RESPONSIBLE FOR DIMONA
SUICIDE BOMBING, DISCOUNTS OTHER FACTIONS' CLAIMS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) PA police chief Kamal al-Shaykh and Hazem Attallah (PM Salam Fayyad's military secretary) told PolOff on February 6-7 that Hamas was responsible for the February 4 suicide bombing in Dimona and that the blast is part of a Hamas strategy to sow instability and undermine peace efforts. Attallah said the PFLP/al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claims of responsibility were spurious and were announced even before the identity of the bombers was known. He said the PFLP and al-Aqsa Brigades factions may currently have militants, with priority-ordered target lists, who are in hiding and out of communications. However, faction spokesmen usually do not know the exact timing/location of a planned suicide attack in advance and must guess whether their militants were those actually involved.

¶2. (S) Attallah said Hamas made a decision, confirmed by official claims of responsibility in al-Qassam Brigades outlets, to restart suicide attacks after a meeting of Hamas and other militant faction leaders in Damascus on January 23. He commented that Hamas overstepped in allowing violence against Egyptian border guards at Rafah crossing and suffered a rebuke from Egypt, and is now shifting its focus to undermining the PA by carrying out terrorist attacks. Al-Shaykh also assessed that Hamas has shifted its strategy to include attacks inside Israel to undermine PA security efforts and GOI-PA security cooperation.

Comment

¶3. (C) The PA security establishment's attribution of the Dimona attack to Hamas is supported by other reporting and is a troubling threat indicator, as Hamas has generally avoided attacks inside Israel since 2004. If Hamas restarts suicide attacks on a major scale, it will greatly complicate PA-GOI security cooperation and peace efforts generally.
WALLES